

Adjusted Closure of the Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Recreational Sector Frequently Asked Questions June 2013

When will the 2013 Gulf recreational red snapper season end?

- The single Gulf-wide federal red snapper season will be 28 days, ending June 29, 2013, at 12:01a.m., local time. The season opened June 1, 2013.

Why did the Gulf recreational red snapper closing date change?

- On March 25, NOAA Fisheries implemented an emergency rule requested by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council authorizing the agency to set separate federal recreational red snapper fishing seasons off Gulf Coast states. On May 31, 2013, the U.S. District Court in Brownsville, Texas, set that emergency rule aside. Therefore, the federal recreational red snapper season must be consistent in federal waters off all five Gulf states.

How was the season length calculated?

- The length of the season is determined by the amount of the quota, the average weight of fish landed, and the estimated catch rates over time.
- NOAA Fisheries is responsible for ensuring the entire recreational harvest, including harvest in state waters, does not exceed the recreational quota. Therefore, if states establish a longer season or a larger bag limit for state waters than the federal regulations allow in federal waters, the federal season must be adjusted to account for the additional harvest expected in state waters.
- For more details, please see the document at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/documents/pdfs/2013_red_snapper_emergency_regs.pdf.

Why does the season length for red snapper keep getting shorter when fishermen are seeing more fish?

- There are more red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico today than there have been in decades. This is a sign that the rebuilding plan that began in 2007 is working.
- Because there are more fish, anglers are catching them faster, landing fish at three times the rate they did in 2007. The fish are also twice the size on average as before.
- To maintain and build on the progress made, NOAA Fisheries must shorten the recreational season to keep fishermen within their catch limit.

What is the status of the new red snapper assessment?

- The new assessment was completed this May and will be presented to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council at their June meeting.
- The goal is to extend or supplement the 2013 season length if supported by the assessment results.
- For more information on the assessment, please visit http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/Sedar_Workshops.jsp?WorkshopNum=31.

What other red snapper regulations are fishery managers considering?

- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is exploring a number of alternative management options, including:
 - A regional management strategy that would delegate some aspects of decision-making to individual Gulf states to provide greater flexibility at the local level while still meeting overall conservation objectives;
 - Reallocating all or some portion of future catch limit increases between the commercial and recreational sectors (the current allocation is 51% commercial and 49% recreational);
 - A days-at-sea program for the for-hire sector;
 - An intersector trading program; and
 - A fish tag program.

Where can I find more information on the red snapper fishery?

- For more information on *Red Snapper, Past, Present and Future*, please visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/index.html.